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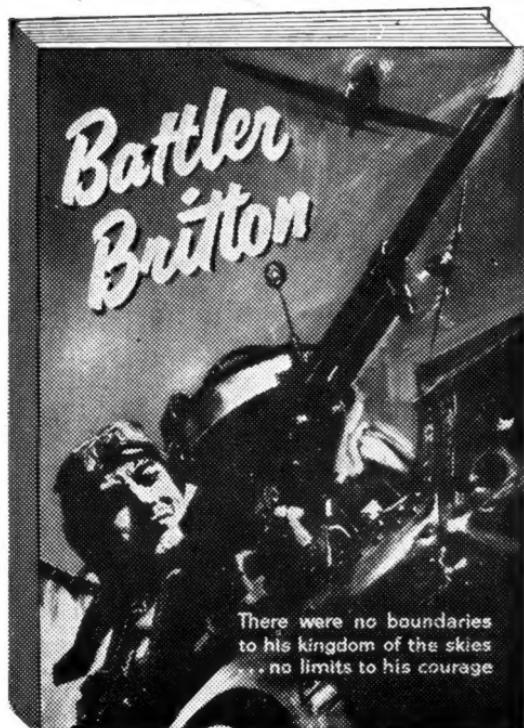
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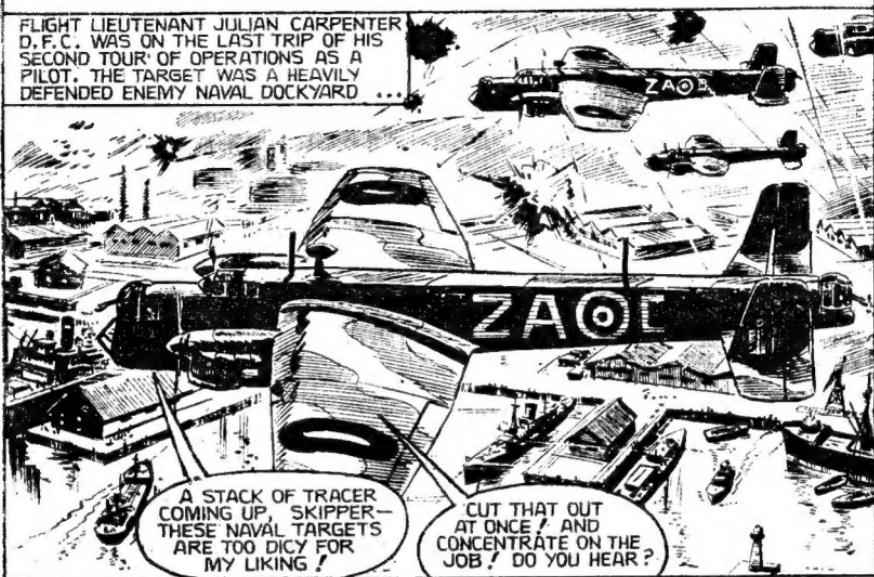
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IT IS SAID THAT THE TESTING-GROUND OF WAR EITHER MAKES OR BREAKS A MAN - THAT IT SHOWS HIM UP FOR WHAT HE REALLY IS. THE LONG STRAIN OF BATTLE BROKE MANY MEN. BUT THERE WERE OTHERS WHO FOUND IN IT THEIR TRUE SELVES, AND REALISED THE REAL NATURE OF THEIR COURAGE.



Chapter 1. SPECIAL CREW

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT JULIAN CARPENTER D.F.C. WAS ON THE LAST TRIP OF HIS SECOND TOUR OF OPERATIONS AS A PILOT. THE TARGET WAS A HEAVILY DEFENDED ENEMY NAVAL DOCKYARD ...



IT WAS WITH A RASPING VOICE THAT JULIAN SILENCED HIS GUNNER — MAINLY TO HIDE HIS OWN FEELINGS. THE OTHERS MUST NOT KNOW HOW THE SWEAT DRIPPED DOWN HIS FACE, HOW EVERY NERVE-END SEEMED TO QUIVER WITH SUPPRESSED FEAR.

IT'S WORSE EVERY TIME . . . IF ONLY WE CAN GET SAFELY HOME JUST ONCE MORE I . . .

HOLD IT AS YOU GO, SKIPPER!
JUST A BIT LONGER . . . BOMBS
GONE!



Aces High

3

THE CLUMBERSOME WHITLEY BROKE UPWARDS, THEN IT WAS BY INSTINCT THAT THE PILOT SUDDENLY SWERVED AS HE SENSED THE PRESENCE OF THE 88mm. GUN FAR BELOW. THERE WAS A GREAT CRACKING EXPLOSION IN THE AIR BEHIND AND BESIDE THEM.

WOW! WHAT A WIZARD TARGET FROM THE TAIL!
GOT THE BRUTE!

MISSUS
BY INCHES! BY
GUM, SKIP—HOW
DO YOU DO
IT?

JULIAN'S REPUTATION AS A PILOT WAS OF THE HIGHEST. NO ONE KNEW THAT FOR HIM, EACH TIME HE TOUCHED DOWN AND FELT SOLID EARTH UNDER HIS FEET AGAIN, IT WAS LIKE BEING RE-BORN.

I DODGED
BECAUSE I WAS
SCARED... I'M
CRACKING... AND
ALL THEY DO IS
DECORATE
ME...

SAY,
CHAPS—YOU CAN
SMELL THE GRASS
ALREADY! ISN'T
IT LOVELY?

HOME,
SWEET HOME!

Aces High

JULIAN COULD NOT FACE THE OTHERS AT THAT MOMENT AS HE WALKED AWAY FROM THE AIRCRAFT ALONE. BUT HE HEARD A REMARK FROM THE REAR-GUNNER ...

KNOW WHAT THE SKIPPER GOT GONGED FOR? NEVER SAYS, AND BEFORE MY TIME. ALL I KNOW IS - HE ALWAYS BRINGS US HOME AGAIN.

IF ONLY HE KNEW... JUST FOR SO MANY OPS, AND STAYING ALIVE.

OH, HULLO, ADJ? WHAT'S UP?

THE ADJUTANT TOLD HIM HE WAS WANTED IN THE C.O.'S OFFICE AFTER DE-BRIEFING. JULIAN'S HEART SANK; SURELY IT COULD NOT BE ANOTHER JOB?

WHATEVER IT IS - I'VE GOT TO KEEP GOING. IF THEY FIND OUT I'M IN A FUNK... ANYWAY, THERE ARE WORSE JOBS THAN A PILOT'S. LOOK AT THE TAIL-GUNNER - ALL ALONE, A SITTING TARGET FOR EVERY ENEMY FIGHTER! OH WELL, LET'S GET IT OVER WITH.

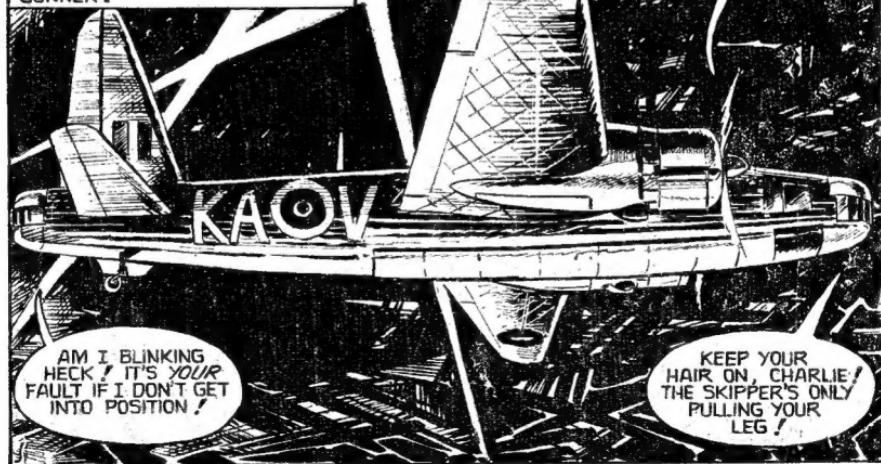
JULIAN DID NOT KNOW IT, BUT HE WAS SHORTLY GOING TO BE PILOTING ONE OF THE MOST RENOWNED TAIL-GUNNERS IN THE R.A.F., FLIGHT SERGEANT "TAIL-END" CHARLIE MORGAN.

TAKE THA',
YE FILTHY, SNEAKING
HUN... AND TELL THE
OTHERS I GOT YE FIRST...
THA' YE PICKED ON
CHARLIE MORGAN FROM
THE CLYDE!



CHARLIE WAS FAMOUS - FOR HIS "CATS' EYES" AND ALSO HIS TEMPER. THE LITTLE SCOTSMAN HAD ALREADY EARNED A D.F.M., WITH A CONFIRMED TOTAL OF FIFTEEN ENEMY FIGHTERS - A VERY HIGH SCORE FOR AN AIR-GUNNER.

HEADING FOR HOME NOW! YOU ONLY GOT ONE TONIGHT, "TAIL-END", YOU'RE SLIPPING!



Aces High

WITH ANYONE ELSE, CHARLIE'S TERRIBLE TEMPER WOULD HAVE BEEN PUT DOWN TO NERVES. BUT HE WAS NOT VISIBLY AFRAID OF ANYTHING — ON LAND OR IN THE AIR.

CUT THE CACKLE —
BANDIT AT SEVEN
O'CLOCK!

HONESTLY,
HE GETS WORSE
EVERY DAY,
SKIPPER!



SUDDENLY THEY WERE ALL ON THE ALERT AGAIN. BANTER WAS FORGOTTEN . . .

THE TRUTH WAS — CHARLIE'S TEMPER WAS GETTING WORSE. HE HAD RECENTLY DEVELOPED A SECRET HORROR THAT HAD BEGUN TO SET HIS NERVES ON EDGE. IT SUDDENLY CAME UPON HIM AGAIN NOW — AS THE MESSERSCHMITT CLOSED IN.

TURNING
ACROSS HIM,
CHARLIE . . . HE'S
ALL YOURS!

ROGER!
SEEN HIM!
HERE HE
COMES!



GREAT HEAVENS!
I CANNA SEE IT!



OF ALL THINGS, THE CRACK REAR-GUNNER HAD BEGUN TO GET DOUBLE VISION!



WHAT THE BLAZES - IT'S NOT LIKE YOU, CHARLIE, TO MISS A TARGET LIKE THAT!

WE SCARED HIM OFF ANYWAY.

SHUT UP, WILL YE! YE DIDN'T GIVE ME A CHANCE!

LIKE JULIAN CARPENTER, THE REAR-GUNNER TRIED TO HIDE HIS OWN SECRET TERROR AND SHAME. THE POOR LAD FROM THE GLASGOW SLUMS HAD SO MUCH TO LOSE ...

HE HAD FOUND UNDREAMED FAME AS AN ACE GUNNER - IT WAS HIS WHOLE LIFE AND HIS WHOLE FUTURE. AT THE DE-BRIEFING, HE LISTENED TO THE CHEERFUL EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE OTHERS - WITH ENVY AND EVEN HATRED.

I KNOW WHAT I'LL DO AFTER THE WAR - TAKE IT EASY, AND GO FISHING ... OR GET A NICE QUIET JOB IN THE CITY.



CHARLIE MORGAN FELT THE ANGER RISING IN HIM AGAIN. THEN THERE WAS AN INTERRUPTION AND TO HIS HORROR, HE SAW TWO ADJUTANTS IN THE DOORWAY.

EXCUSE ME, CHAPS! FLIGHT SERGEANT MORGAN'S WANTED BY THE C.O.



JULIAN CARPENTER AND MORGAN WERE TWO MEN WITH DESPERATE PERSONAL PROBLEMS - EACH WITH A TORTURING ENVY OF OTHERS WHO APPARENTLY HAD NONE. ONE SUCH, WHOM THEY WERE SHORTLY GOING TO MEET, WAS A CERTAIN NAVIGATOR, FLYING OFFICER KENNETH DETLING.



Aces High

DETLING NEVER SHOWED ANY FEAR AND NEVER MADE A MISTAKE, AND HE WAS INTOLERANT OF THOSE WHO DID. A SUPREME NAVIGATOR, HE WAS AT THE MOMENT OUT WITH A RAW CREW AND THEREFORE IN COMMAND OF THE AIRCRAFT.

DON'T LIKE THIS-ER-WE'RE LOSING PRESSURE - OIL LEAK SOMEWHERE...

I'M NEVER OFF COURSE... DO AS YOU'RE TOLD!

THEN LET'S TURN BACK, SKIP...

THE OUTCOME WAS THAT THEY DID TURN BACK AFTER JETTISONING THEIR BOMBS. HOME AGAIN, EXCUSES WERE NERVOUSLY PREPARED.

THE OIL FEED IN THE PORT ENGINE WAS FAULTY... AND I'LL JOLLY WELL TELL THEM SO.

LOOK, LET'S SAY WE GOT LOST.

WE DIDN'T GET LOST - AND YOU VERY WELL KNOW IT! I'VE GOT MY REPUTATION... I'LL HAVE TO REPORT THIS, I'M AFRAID.

Aces High

DETLING REPORTED TO THE COMMANDING OFFICER IN HIS OFFICE . . .

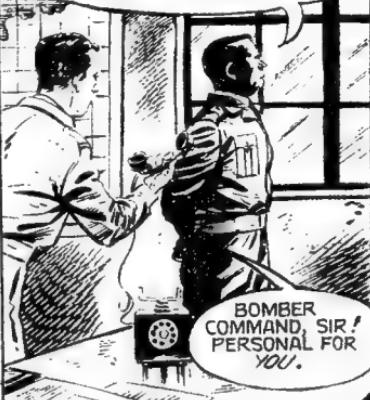
. . . AND THE OIL GAUGE WAS ONLY DOWN A DEGREE OR TWO. I GAVE THEM A PERFECT COURSE. IT WAS UP TO THE PILOT AND THE BOMB-AIMER.

REMEMBER THEY'RE NEW TO IT, DETLING. IT'S THE THIRD CREW YOU'VE REPORTED, AND I'M WORRIED ABOUT LOSING TOO MANY—POTENTIALLY ANYWAY—REASONABLE AIRCREW. BUT, OF COURSE, I'LL HAVE TO TAKE ACTION ON WHAT YOU SAY . . .



AFTER DETLING HAD LEFT, THE C.O. AIRED HIS OWN VIEWS TO HIS ADJUTANT . . .

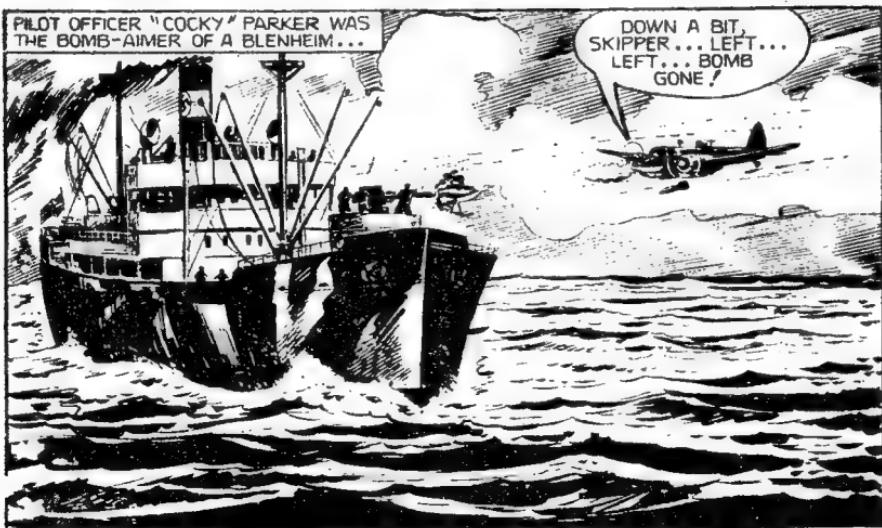
DETLING'S ALWAYS RIGHT. I ALMOST WISH HE'D MAKE A MISTAKE HIMSELF SOMETIMES. HOW HIS CREWS MUST HATE HIM—BUT HE'S A CRACKING FINE NAVIGATOR. YES! WHO IS IT?



WHAT BOMBER COMMAND HAD TO SAY CURIOUSLY ENOUGH CONCERNED DETLING—AND ALSO ONE OTHER CHARACTER WE HAVE TO MEET IN THIS STORY.

PILOT OFFICER "COCKY" PARKER WAS THE BOMB-AIMER OF A BLENHEIM . . .

DOWN A BIT,
SKIPPER . . . LEFT . . .
LEFT . . . BOMB
GONE!



ONE OF THE FIRST BOMB AIMERS TO HAVE BEEN COMMISSIONED, HE HAD A WELL-DESERVED REPUTATION FOR UNCANNY ACCURACY - AND HE KNEW IT.



LIKE KENNETH DETLING, COCKY PARKER WAS ALWAYS DEAD RIGHT...



COCKY PARKER WAS ALSO A TRAINED RADIO-OPERATOR AND HAD A DUAL ROLE IN THE BLENHEIM...



Chapter 2. POINT OF TENSION

SO FOUR AIRMEN TRAVELED NORTH UNDER SECRET ORDERS, THREE BY TRAIN AND ONE OF THEM IN HIS OWN VINTAGE BENTLEY. THE SPEED AT WHICH JULIAN CARPENTER DROVE REFLECTED HIS NERVOUS TENSION ...

CRAZY BLIGHTER
IN THAT CAR ! HE'S
GAINING ON US.



ODDLY ENOUGH, THE THREE WHO TRAVELED BY TRAIN OCCUPIED THE SAME COMPARTMENT.

ANY ROOM ?
I'M OFF TO WILD
BONNY SCOTLAND. I SAY,
WHERE'RE YOU GOING,
OLD CHAP ?





NO ONE STIRRED AND CRUMBIE WENT ON TO TELL THEM HOW THEY MUST TRAIN TOGETHER FOR VERY SPECIAL FLYING, HOW THEY MUST BE 'SPOT ON' IN A WEEK FOR TIME WAS INCREDIBLY SHORT.

I'M SORRY TO TAKE YOU AWAY FROM YOUR SQUADRONS. BIT OF A WRENCH. LEAVING OLD FRIENDS...

OH, THAT'S ALL RIGHT, SIR.



DETLING, AT LEAST, WAS AWARE OF HIS UNPOPULARITY.

THEN THE AIR VICE-MARSHAL TOOK THEM OUT TO THEIR AIRCRAFT. IT WAS A WELLINGTON STRIPPED OF ITS FRONT TURRET AND WITH SPECIALLY TUNED UP ENGINES FOR EXTRA SPEED.

WHEN ARE THE REST OF THE CREW COMING, SIR? WE'RE SHORT.

NO, CARPENTER, YOU'VE GOT TO LEARN TO DO WITH FOUR.

PARKER CAN ALSO HANDLE A RADIO. WEIGHT IS BEING CUT DOWN TO THE ABSOLUTE MINIMUM - PARTLY FOR EXTRA FUEL, AND PARTLY - WELL, YOU'LL LEARN LATER. NOW GO AWAY, AND SHAKE DOWN.



AFTERWARDS IN PRIVATE, CRUMBIE RE-STATEST HIS SATISFACTION.

WELL, NOW TO AWAIT THE NEW BOMB...! WE'VE GOT OUR CREW.

EACH HAND-PICKED FOR HIS OUTSTANDING REPUTATION AT HIS OWN JOB... THEY OUGHT TO GET ALONG SPLENDIDLY TOGETHER.

THEY SAY THE BIGGEST PROBLEM IN ORGANISATION IS THE HUMAN ELEMENT... WE'RE ALREADY OVER OUR WORST HURDLE THEN, SIR.



BUT WERE THEY? IT WAS A POET COUNTRYMAN OF MORGAN'S WHO ONCE SAID "THE BEST-LAID SCHEMES, O' MICE AN' MEN GANG AFT AGLEY."

Aces High

LATER. THE THREE OFFICERS OF THE CREW FOUND THEMSELVES TRYING TO WEIGH EACH OTHER UP, EACH CONSCIOUS OF HIS OWN SECRET.



JULIAN FELT ABASHED AT THE OTHER'S READY COURAGE, BUT DETLING WAS EYING COCKY PARKER, REMEMBERING HOW HE HAD TALKED TOO MUCH ON THE TRAIN.

I'M NOT THE IMAGINATIVE TYPE. YOU SEE A FEW KITES IN FLAMES. THINK IT'S GOING TO BE YOU NEXT... TO HELL WITH IT! IT WON'T HAPPEN TO ME!



JULIAN, AT THE TIME, CONSIDERED IT A STRANGE REMARK OF DETLING'S, BUT HE THOUGHT NO MORE ABOUT IT.

FLIGHT SERGEANT MORGAN, OF COURSE, COULD NOT MESS WITH THE OTHERS. BUT FOR THE MOMENT HE HAD SOMETHING ELSE ON HIS MIND. IT WAS THE SECOND TIME HE HAD UNOFFICIALLY SOUGHT MEDICAL OPINION.

I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING WRONG! BUT IF YOU SAY IT'S PERIODIC I SHOULD SEE SOME OF YOUR OWN PEOPLE ABOUT IT, OLD CHAP, I DON'T THINK YOU OUGHT TO GO ON FLYING!



Aces High

BUT THAT WAS SOMETHING THAT CHARLIE WAS CERTAINLY NOT GOING TO DO. ARRIVING BACK AT THE AIRFIELD. THE SIGHT OF THE OVER-BEARING DETLING INFURIATED HIM - AND SUDDENLY HE GOT HIS DOUBLE VISION AGAIN.

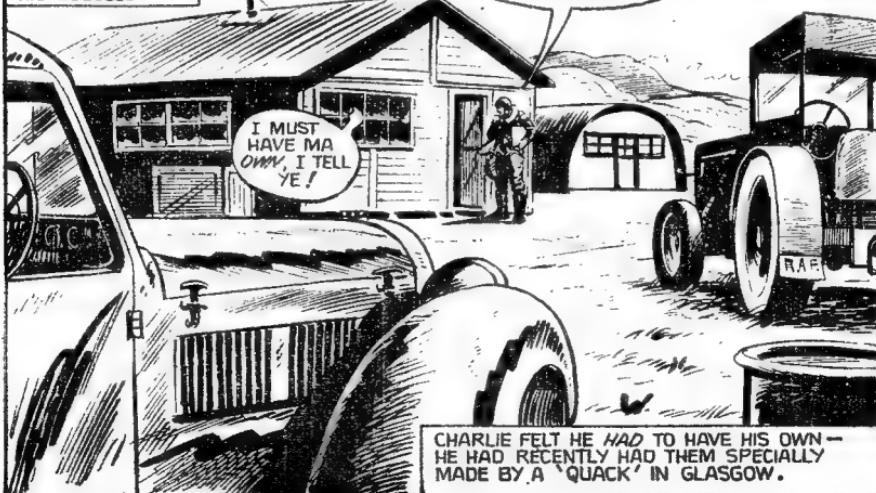
FOR PETE'S SAKE, MORGAN, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? WE'RE ALL WAITING FOR YOU. TRAINING FLIGHT ORDERED AS SOON AS WE'RE READY. GET YOUR KIT AND HURRY!



A FEW MINUTES LATER, DASHING OUT OF THE CREW ROOM, CHARLIE TURNED BACK FOR HIS GOGGLES.

NEVER MIND YOUR GOGGLES! I'VE GOT A SPARE PAIR... THE OTHERS ARE ALREADY ABOARD.
COME ON!

I MUST HAVE MA OMNY, I TELL YE!



CHARLIE FELT HE HAD TO HAVE HIS OWN - HE HAD RECENTLY HAD THEM SPECIALLY MADE BY A 'QUACK' IN GLASGOW.

IF ANYONE HAD KNOWN THAT CHARLIE MORGAN NOW HAD BI-FOCAL LENSES IN HIS GOGGLES, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN A STORMY INVESTIGATION. BUT THE KNOWLEDGE THAT HE HAD THEM COMFORTED CHARLIE.



AS USUAL, DETLING'S THOUGHTS WERE CRITICAL OF HIS FELLOW AIRMEN ...



SKIMMING THE LAKES, FLYING THROUGH VALLEYS, THEY MIGHT ESCAPE DETECTION FROM THE AIR OR BY RADAR WHEN THE OPERATION WAS ON.



THEY CAME OUT ABOVE A FLAT EXPANSE OF HEATHER, HUGGING THE GROUND AT LESS THAN FIFTY FEET.

A LOT OF SMOKE AHEAD, SKIP. DO WE GO THROUGH IT?

NAVIGATOR HERE. THE MAP SHOWS NO HILLS... ORDERS ARE TO KEEP LOW. LEAVE THE COURSE TO ME ...

JULIAN BROKE INTO A SWEAT AS THEY PLUNGED INTO THE BILLOWING CLOUD OF SMOKE. FLYING ON INSTRUMENTS, THEY WERE ALL IN DETLING'S HANDS...

HEY! WE'RE FLYING RIGHT OVER A HEATH FIRE! THERE ARE FLAMES UNDERNEATH!

SUDDENLY THERE CAME AN ELECTRIFYING SHOUT FROM DETLING.

PULL UP THE NOSE, SKIPPER... CLIMB... CLIMB... THERE'S A HILL!



JULIAN'S REFLEXES WERE INSTANTANEOUS. HE HAULED DESPERATELY WITH ALL HIS WEIGHT ON THE STICK AND THE WELLINGTON REARED SKYWARDS. DETLING'S VOICE FOR ONCE WAS SHAKY.

DETLING! I THOUGHT YOU SAID THERE WASN'T A HILL!

I MADE A MI... THAT'S TO SAY, IT WAS NEARER THAN I THOUGHT.



THE NEXT MOMENT THEY BROKE CLEAR — STILL OVER PERFECTLY FLAT GROUND.

THERE'S NO BLINKING HILL ANYWHERE!



JULIAN'S OWN THOUGHTS ECHOED THOSE OF EVERYONE ELSE.

I WONDER IF DETLING'S QUITE SUCH A GOOD NAVIGATOR AS HE'S REPUTED TO BE... IF NOT, WE'RE IN FOR TROUBLE.

SORRY! THERE WAS A STAIN ON THE MAP... IT WON'T OCCUR AGAIN.

SO DOUBT OF ONE ANOTHER HAD ALREADY BEGUN TO CREEP INTO THEIR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP — AND EACH OF THEM KNEW IT WAS A BAD THING.

THAT EVENING, THEY ALL WENT OUT TO TRY TO FORGET THEIR DIFFERENCES. IN THAT WAY THEY COULD INCLUDE CHARLIE MORGAN IN THE PARTY. BUT THEY WERE STILL ALL A BIT ON EDGE.

ALL READY, SKIPPER?

SKIPPER AND HIS RITZY CAR... AND DETLING'S ALWAYS WATCHING YOU LIKE A CAT — GIVES ME THE CREEPS.

I WONDER IF DETLING'S RIGHT ABOUT PARKER? COULD BE FATAL IF ANYONE TALKS.

Aces High

VERY SOON THEY HAD ORGANISED A DARTS' MATCH AGAINST THE LOCALS. AND WHEN COCKY THREW A BULL - HE LET EVERYONE KNOW IT, WITH HIS USUAL TACTLESSNESS.

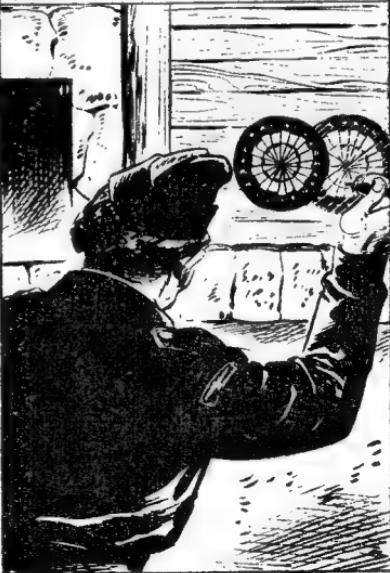
WHAT DID I TELL YOU!
IT TAKES SLICK MICK TO
TEACH THESE YOKEL JOCKS
TO PLAY DARTS... ANYWAY,
WHO'D LIVE IN A ONE-HORSE
SLUM LIKE THIS.



CHARLIE MORGAN, HIMSELF A SCOTSMAN FROM REAL SLUMS, IMMEDIATELY LOST HIS TEMPER. COCKY WAS TOO PROUD TO RETRACT, HE ONLY BLUNDERED ON...



CHARLIE COULD NOT REFUSE THE CHALLENGE - BUT HE ONLY HELD HIS TEMPER BACK BY A SUPREME EFFORT. HE TOOK THE FIRST DART, AND THEN...





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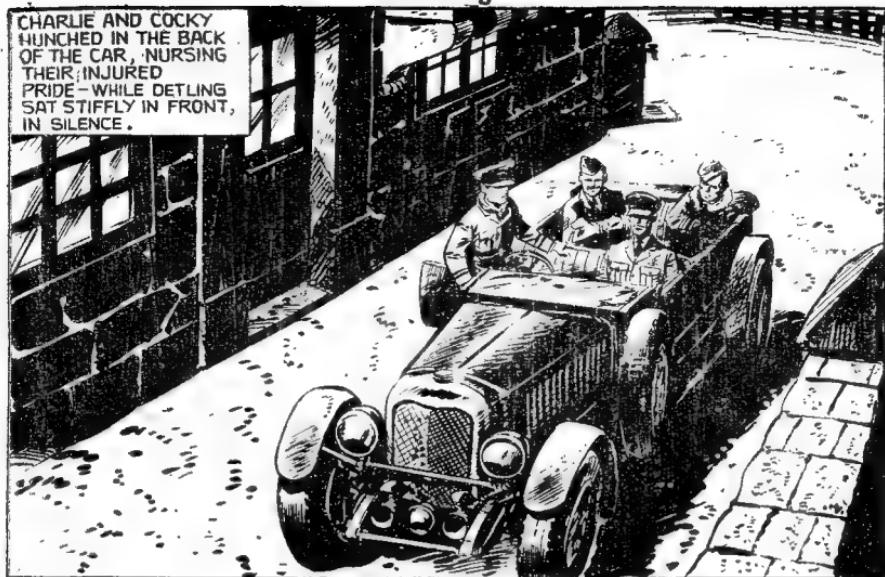
DETLING STEPPED FORWARD INSTANTLY,
OFFICIOUS AS EVER . . .



THE THUMP AS COCKY HIT THE FLOOR
SWUNG JULIAN ROUND AND HE
INTERRUPTED VEHEMENTLY,



CHARLIE AND COCKY HUNCHED IN THE BACK OF THE CAR, NURSING THEIR INJURED PRIDE—WHILE DETLING SAT STIFFLY IN FRONT, IN SILENCE.



JULIAN SENT THE BIG BENTLEY RACING THROUGH THE DARK COUNTRYSIDE, HIS OWN PENT-UP NERVES CLOSE TO SNAPPING .

I SAY,
STEADY ON,
SKIPPER—
WE'RE DOING
NINETY!

PERHAPS A
COMMON DANGER WILL
BRING YOU ALL TO
YOUR SENSES!

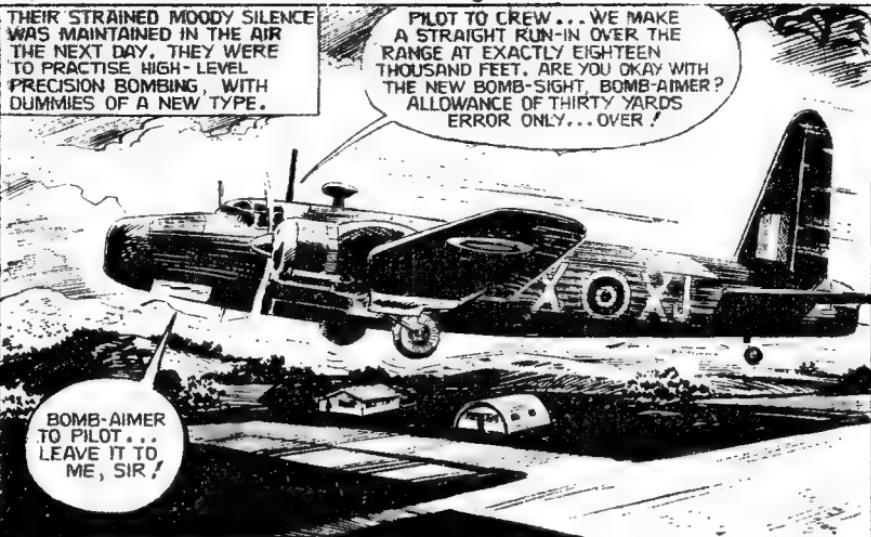


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THEIR STRAINED MOODY SILENCE WAS MAINTAINED IN THE AIR THE NEXT DAY. THEY WERE TO PRACTISE HIGH-LEVEL PRECISION BOMBING, WITH DUMMIES OF A NEW TYPE.

PILOT TO CREW... WE MAKE A STRAIGHT RUN-IN OVER THE RANGE AT EXACTLY EIGHTEEN THOUSAND FEET. ARE YOU OKAY WITH THE NEW BOMB-SIGHT, BOMB-AIMER? ALLOWANCE OF THIRTY YARDS ERROR ONLY... OVER!

BOMB-AIMER
TO PILOT...
LEAVE IT TO
ME, SIR!



THEY HAD LEARNED SOMETHING ABOUT THE BOMB THEY WERE TO CARRY. A NEW TYPE, HARDENED AND SHAPED FOR DEEP PENETRATION WITH A DELAY FUSE OF SEVEN SECONDS.

THE BOMB'S DESTRUCTIVE POWER WAS REPORTED TO BE TERRIFIC...

NAVIGATOR
HERE... ON
COURSE NOW...
BOMBING-RANGE
ONE-MILE
AHEAD.

BOMB
GONE! SLAP
ON TARGET!

BOMB-AIMER
TO PILOT...
SEEN THE SMOKE
MARKERS...
STEADY AS
YOU GO...



IN THE TARGET AREA, AIR VICE-MARSHAL CRUMBIE AND SOME OTHER EXPERTS WERE WATCHING FROM THE SAFETY OF A REINFORCED BUNKER.

ANOTHER ONE SPOT ON! I NEVER DREAMED SUCH ACCURACY WAS POSSIBLE!

BY JOVE! THEY WORK WONDERFULLY TOGETHER!



HOW FAR FROM THE TRUTH WAS THE SENIOR OFFICER'S REMARK.

SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, AIR VICE-MARSHAL CRUMBIE DECIDED TO TAKE THE CAPTAIN OF THE CREW INTO HIS CONFIDENCE.

TO BE BRIEF, BOTH SIDES ARE WORKING ON A NEW FORM OF DESTRUCTIVE POWER—ATOMIC FISSION! YOU WON'T UNDERSTAND, BUT NEVER MIND. YOU CAN TAKE IT FROM ME THAT WHICHEVER SIDE MAKES IT FIRST—

WINS THE WAR!



Aces High

WE KNOW THE GERMANS ARE BUILDING THEIR FIRST REACTOR DEEP IN THE HEART OF NORWAY'S MOUNTAINS. AGENTS TELL US IT WILL MATURE VERY SHORTLY. IF IT DOES - THEY'RE AHEAD OF US. IF SOMETHING SERIOUS HAPPENED TO IT - THEY WOULD BE PUT BACK PERHAPS TWO YEARS. THAT IS YOUR JOB - AND YOU CAN SEE WHY IT'S DESPERATELY IMPORTANT.



THAT NIGHT IN THE MESS JULIAN SAT ALONE IN A CORNER—ALMOST OVERWHELMED BY WHAT HE HAD BEEN TOLD. HIS CREW'S NERVES WERE EVEN MORE AT FEVER PITCH, FOR THEY WERE ALREADY AT READINESS FOR THE MYSTERY OPERATION WAITING ONLY FOR SUITABLE WEATHER.

THIS TERRIBLE STRAIN BETWEEN US ALL JUST CAN'T GO ON! SOMETHING'S GOT TO BREAK!



AT THAT MOMENT, THE YOUTHFUL "COCKY" PARKER—IN MORE NERVOUS HIGH-SPRITS THAN HE WOULD ADMIT—PREPARED TO PLAY A TRICK ON THE SOLEMN DETLING.



DETLING'S THOUGHTS WERE FAR AWAY - THE FLAMES OF THE FIRE IN THE MESS WERE BRINGING BACK TO HIM MEMORIES OF THE FLAMES OF ANOTHER INCIDENT IN HIS LIFE.



HE HAD BEEN ACTING CONTROL OFFICER. A GREAT FRIEND OF HIS WAS COMING IN TO LAND WITH A DAMAGED UNDERCARRIAGE. HE HAD ASKED PERMISSION TO TAKE THE BOMBER UP AGAIN AND BALE OUT.

I FEEL IT YOUR DUTY TO TRY AND LAND THE AIRCRAFT... YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT. THE CRASH-WAGONS ARE WAITING... COME IN, R FOR ROGER. GOOD LUCK!



HIS MEMORY MOVED RELENTLESSLY ON... THE HAMPTON HAD SKIDDED GROTESQUELY DOWN THE RUNWAY, AND BURST INTO A WHITE-HOT SHEET OF FLAMES...

IT'S NO GOOD, SIR, WE CAN'T GET NEAR!

OH, NO! TERRIBLE...

DETLING COULD ALMOST FEEL THE HEAT OF THE FLAMES - THE GLARE IN HIS EYES...

SUDDENLY HE GAVE A STRANGLED CRY AND FLUNG HIMSELF BACK IN HIS CHAIR AS REAL FLAMES LICKED AROUND HIS FACE...



COCKY HAD - FOR A PRANK -
SET LIGHT TO THE NEWSPAPER
IN DETLING'S HANDS. RAGING
FURY BLAZED IN THE
NAVIGATOR'S EYES . . .



DETLING CROUCHED, HIS FACE WORKING SAVAGELY, AS IF HE WERE ABOUT TO FLING HIMSELF AT COCKY.

BUT FOR JULIAN, IT WAS BREAKING POINT. HE SPRANG TO HIS FEET AND GAVE A SHOUT THAT STARTLED THE OTHER TWO INTO IMMOBILITY AND SILENCE.



AND IN THAT MOMENT OF ELECTRIFYING TENSION, THE TELEPHONE BELL RANG. THE CALL WAS FOR JULIAN . . .



Aces High

AT THE BRIEFING, THE WHOLE CREW WERE TOLD EVERYTHING. THE GERMAN REACTOR WAS BUILT DEEP UNDERGROUND - HENCE CRUMBIE'S PROPOSED USE OF A DEEPLY EXPLODING BOMB. BUT THERE WAS ONE PART OF THE APPARATUS ABOVE GROUND - THE CAMOUFLAGED COOLING TOWER.

THE GERMANS COULD EASILY BUILD ANOTHER TOWER... BUT IT ACTS AS YOUR TARGET... LOOK AT IT WELL. NOTE THE TWO TREES. MEMORISE IT. SPARKS! YOU'VE GOT TO HIT THAT TOWER FROM EIGHTEEN THOUSAND FEET!



A FAST SPECIAL LONG-RANGE BEAUFIGHTER WAS TO GO AHEAD OF THE WELLINGTON TO DROP SMOKE MARKERS FOR THEM. DETLING WAS GIVEN THE RENDEZVOUS REFERENCE...

DO WE HAVE AN ESCORT, SIR?

AFRAID NOT... THE PLACE IS STIFF WITH FLAK. A LARGE FORCE WOULD BE LOCATED COMING IN MILES AWAY... OUR ONLY CHANCE IS ONE BOMBER, WITH AN OUTSTANDING CREW LIKE YOURSELVES, DODGING IN THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS ALONE - WITHOUT BEING DETECTED UNTIL THE VERY LAST MOMENT!



Chapter 3. DESPERATE MISSION

FLYING LOW OVER THE SEA, THE CREW AT FIRST WERE STRANGELY SILENT, EACH WRAPPED IN HIS OWN THOUGHTS: MORGAN OF HIS GOGGLES, DETLING HIS MEMORIES, JULIAN HIS FEARS - AND COCKY IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT HE WAS ON THE GREATEST JOB HE HAD EVER BEEN ASKED TO DO.



THEIR SUCCESS AND THEIR LIVES DEPENDED ON THEIR WORKING NOW AS A TEAM !

HALF AN HOUR PASSED AND COCKY ASKED IF THEY COULD SWITCH ON THE WIRELESS FOR THEIR ENTERTAINMENT. JULIAN THOUGHT IT NOT A BAD IDEA, AND ALLOWED IT.





JULIAN FLUNG THE WELLINGTON INTO A STEEP BANK BACK TOWARDS THE E-BOAT.

IF CHARLIE'S AS GOOD AS THEY SAY... HE'LL SHOOT THEM ALL UP IN ONE BURST.

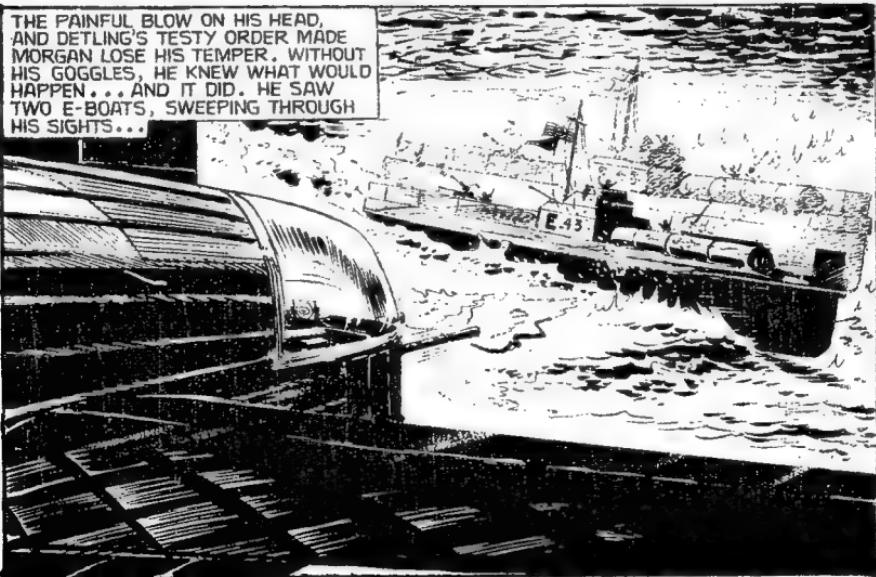
THEY'RE ALL YOURS, CHARLIE! A FULL BAG NOW!

BUT THE SUDDENNESS OF JULIAN'S TURN CAUGHT CHARLIE UNAWARES, HE WAS FLUNG AGAINST THE SIDE OF HIS TURRET— AND HIS PRECIOUS GOGGLES WERE SMASHED.

BLINKING HECK! I'VE BROKEN MY GOGGLES!

DARN YOUR GOGGLES, MORGAN! TAKE YOUR TARGET.

THE PAINFUL BLOW ON HIS HEAD, AND DETLING'S TESTY ORDER MADE MORGAN LOSE HIS TEMPER. WITHOUT HIS GOGGLES, HE KNEW WHAT WOULD HAPPEN... AND IT DID. HE SAW TWO E-BOATS, SWEEPING THROUGH HIS SIGHTS...



A TORNADO OF STEEL SWEEPED THE E-BOAT'S DECK, BUT MORGAN WAS AIMING ALMOST BY GUESSWORK. AS THE WELLINGTON PULLED AWAY, JULIAN ASKED IF HE HAD GOT THEM ALL.

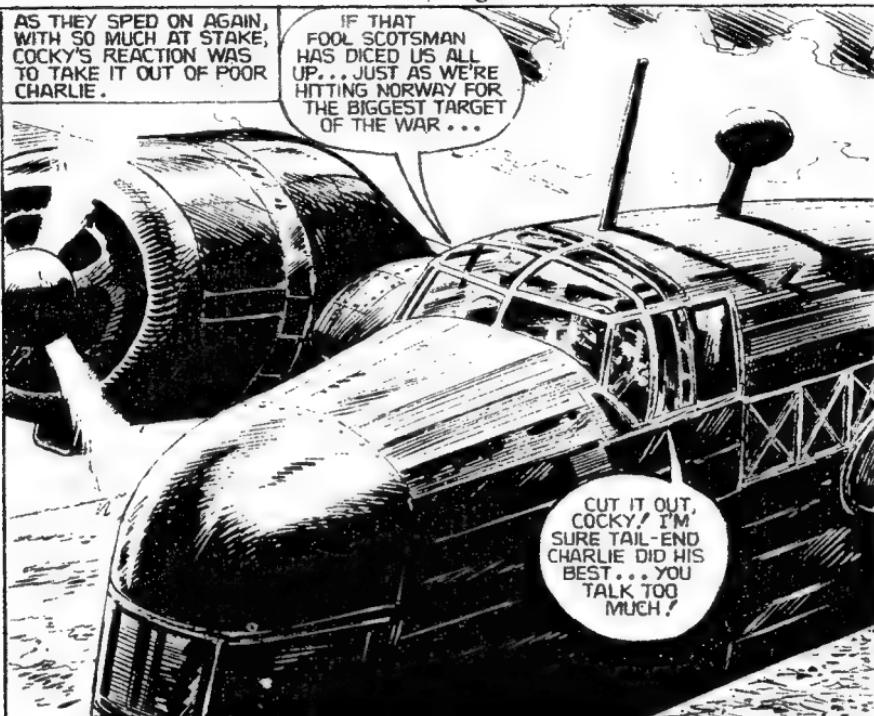
I-1 THINK SO, SKIPPER.

WELL, WE CAN'T HANG AROUND HERE. LET'S HOPE YOU DID... OR WE MAY BE IN FOR THE HOTTEST RECEPTION ANY OF US HAVE EVER HAD.

IN FACT, MOST OF THE E-BOAT'S CREW SURVIVED UNHURT... THEY WERE ALREADY RADIOPING THE RESULT OF THE ENCOUNTER.

THE PIG-DOG ENGLANDERS! QUICK, RADIO THEIR COURSE...

ENEMY BOMBER PROCEEDING ON COURSE ZERO FOUR SIX... HEADING FOR NORWAY...



FOR A MOMENT THERE WAS A HORRIFIED SILENCE. THEN JULIAN ROUNDED ON COCKY FURIOUSLY...

YOU BLISTERING IDIOT, MICK! IF ANYONE HAS DICED US UP - YOU HAVE! NOW GET DOWN THERE, AND KEEP QUIET!

I'M TERRIBLY SORRY, SKIPPER.

PERHAPS IT WAS JUST AS WELL THEY DID NOT KNOW FOR CERTAIN THAT ALREADY THERE WAS CONSTERNATION IN A GERMAN CONTROL STATION NOT A HUNDRED MILES AWAY.

... AND A SINGLE BOMBER REPORTED HEADING FOR TROHELM FIORD - THE TWO TIE-UP, HERR COLONEL!

HERR LEUTNANT! HAVE ALL THE GUNS ALERTED IN THE VERY TOP SECRET AREA ... AND ONE MOMENT - ANOTHER THING...



40
Aces High

THE CONTROL COMMANDANT REMEMBERED A MESSERSCHMITT FIGHTER THAT WAS OUT ON PATROL AHEAD OF THE REPORTED POSITION OF THE WELLINGTON.

HAWK ZERO FOUR CONTROL - TURNING TO INVESTIGATE AND ATTACK!

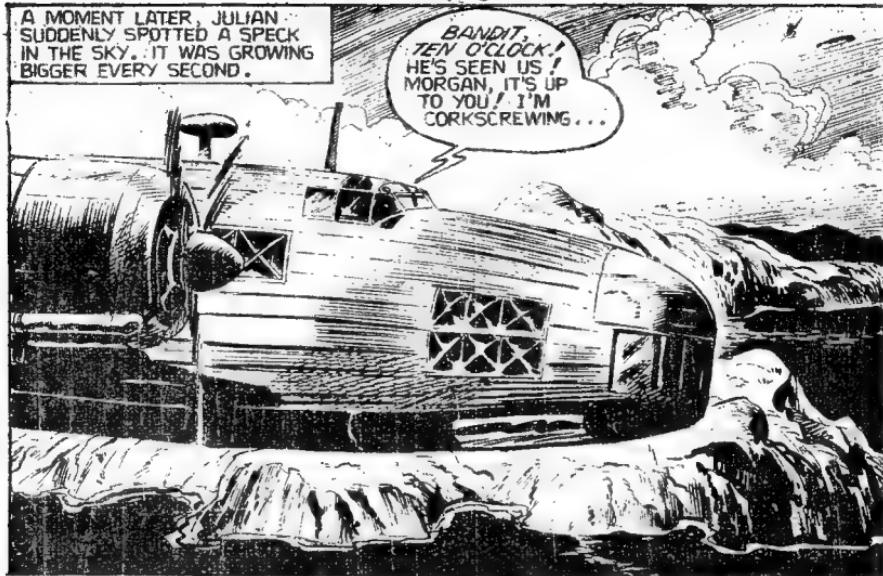


THE WELLINGTON'S CREW SAW THE COAST FLASH PAST - AND ROARED ON, BANKING LOW UP A TWISTING FIORD - APPARENTLY WITHOUT BEING SEEN. IT WAS DETLING WHO MUST PLOT THEM ON TO THEIR TARGET . . .

NOW ON ZERO THREE EIGHT . . . AIRSPEED TWO-FOUR-SEVEN . . . OVER.



ROGER!
WE JUMP OVER INTO THE NEXT VALLEY AFTER THREE MILES,
SKIPPER!



COCKY SUDDENLY REALISED WHAT ONLY ONE TURRET MEANT. THEIR LIVES WERE VIRTUALLY IN THE REAR GUNNER'S HANDS AND THE BOMB-AIMER FELT A WAVE OF RELIEF NOT TO HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY HIMSELF.



THE REAR GUN TURRET TURNED TO MEET THE ONCOMING FIGHTER AS JULIAN CORKSCREWED DOWN THE PRECIPITOUS VALLEY AT FULL THROTTLE.

I'VE GOT TO JUMP THE NEXT RIDGE AT TREE-TOP HEIGHT... GET HIM BEFORE THEN - WHILE WE HAVE THE ADVANTAGE.



ALL AT ONCE, CHARLIE FELT STRANGELY COOL... AND TO HIS SURPRISE...



ONE - CLEAR - ME-109 HUNG FOR A MOMENT IN HIS SIGHTS - AND HE SQUEEZED THE TRIGGERS.

FOR A SECOND OR TWO THE AIR WAS ALIVE WITH BULLETS, SOME RIPPING THROUGH THE FUSELAGE... THEN THEY WERE UP AND SKIMMING OVER THE RIDGE.

THAT'S A RIGHT QUEER THING NOW... I SAW IT AS CLEAR AS CRYSTAL... I WONDER IF IT'S TO DO WI' MY BLINKING TEMPER...



THEY DIPPED DOWN AGAIN INTO THE NEXT VALLEY, AND ALTERED COURSE ONCE MORE... AFTER A WHILE THE METICULOUS DETLING HAPPENED TO NOTICE ONE OF HIS INSTRUMENTS...

NAVIGATOR HERE, SKIPPER... MY AMMETER IS DROPPING!

OH, DON'T WORRY! IT CAN'T BE ANYTHING SERIOUS... CHEER UP!



BUT NOT LONG AFTERWARDS IT WAS JULIAN'S TURN TO BE PUZZLED.

THAT'S FUNNY! CAN ANY OF YOU CHAPS SMELL ANYTHING BURNING?

NO, NOT ME, SKIPPER!



BUT SUDDENLY A BRIGHT FLASH OF FLAME SPRANG UP UNDER THE NAVIGATOR'S TABLE AND DETLING LEAPED TO HIS FEET WITH A FRIGHTENED YELL, WAVING HIS ARMS FRANTICALLY.

FIRE!
FIRE! HELP,
FOR PETE'S
SAKE!

NORMALLY SO SELF-ASSURED, THE NAVIGATOR WAS ALMOST HYSTERICAL.

NEAR PANIC SEIZED THE CREW UNTIL COCKY SCRAMBLED AFT, GRABBED A FIRE-EXTINGUISHER — AND SET ABOUT THE FLAMES.

AAGH!
WE'LL ALL
BE BURNED
ALIVE!



Chapter 4.

DOUBLE TARGET

JULIAN'S EYES SEARCHED THE SKY FOR THE BEAUFIKER - BUT IN VAIN. HE ORDERED DETLING TO RE-CHECK THE COURSE - AND A MOMENT LATER, THE NAVIGATOR GAVE A STRANGLED GASP OF HORROR ...

G-GREAT
HEAVENS!
I WAS WRONG -
I CALCULATED
FIVE DEGREES
INSTEAD OF
FIFTEEN!

WHAT?
THEN WE'RE
LOST!



MEANWHILE, THE BEAUFIKER
WAS CIRCLING ABOVE THE
CORRECT RENDEZVOUS POINT ...

STILL NO
SIGN OF THEM AND
OUR FUEL'S GETTING LOW!
WE'LL HAVE TO GO AHEAD
AND DROP OUR MARKERS
- OR WE'LL NEVER
MAKE IT BACK.

I'M AFRAID
SO, SKIPPER. IT'LL
LET THE CAT OUT OF
THE BAG! THE OTHERS
WILL FLY INTO A FULL
ALERT... IF THEY
HAVEN'T BEEN SHOT
DOWN ALREADY!



FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER . . .

WE'RE
RIGHT AGAIN
NOW . . .ARE YOU
SURE? THERE'S
NO SIGN OF THE
BEAUFIGHTER.I CONFIRM
IT, SKIPPER . . .
I RECOGNISE THAT
MOUNTAIN FROM
THE PHOTOS.

DESPERATELY JULIAN WEIGHED THE ALTERNATIVES. THE BEAUFIGHTER HAD EITHER GONE ON AHEAD - OR BEEN SHOT DOWN. BUT WHICH? IT WAS DETLING'S FORETHOUGHT THAT CAME TO HIS RESCUE . . .

WE CAN'T
HOPE TO BOMB
ACCURATELY FROM
EIGHTEEN THOUSAND
FEET WITHOUT
MARKERS.AS A
MATTER OF FACT,
SKIPPER, I BROUGHT
SOME SPARE MARKERS.
WE-WE COULD DROP
OUR OWN . . .



AS THEY FLEW TOWARDS THE TARGET AREA, LIGHT FLAK BEGAN TO BURST AROUND THEM.



WITH EVERY SECOND, THE FLAK BECAME HEAVIER. THE NOISE WAS INDESCRIBABLE. EVERY MAN STEELED HIMSELF FOR THE ORDEAL AHEAD.

HOW DO YE LIKE IT, COCKY?

AUOUCH !
IT'S MOSTLY ABOVE
US - WELL FLOWN,
JULIAN !

IT'S AWFUL !
IT'S TERRIBLE !
PULL HER UP,
SKIPPER - PULL
HER UP !

BUT SUDDENLY COCKY WAS YELLING WITH SHOCK AND PANIC. HE HAD NEVER EXPERIENCED THE EXPLOSIVE VIOLENCE OF PACKED ENEMY DEFENCES BEFORE .



Aces High

COCKY'S SHOUTS DINNED IN EVERYONE'S EARS AS JULIAN HELD THE WELLINGTON LOW, FIGHTING DOWN HIS OWN ALMOST OVERPOWERING INSTINCT TO BREAK AWAY FROM THE DEADLY FLAK - BUT SOMETHING MADE HIM HOLD ON.



SOMEHOW THE PILOT GASPED OUT A FEW WORDS OF RE-ASSURANCE TO THE BOMB-AIMER . . .

STICK IT, COCKY!
I'M SCARED OUT OF MY
WITS, TOO. AND IT'S
WORSE EVERY
TIME . . .



COCKY SNATCHED AT JULIAN'S FRANK ADMISSION LIKE A DROWNING MAN SNATCHES AT A ROPE. BUT HIS VOICE WAS STILL SHAKY . . .

YOU SCARED, TOO,
SKIPPER? I NEVER
REALISED IT! SORRY,
CHAPS, FIRST TIME
AND ALL THAT—
I CAN TAKE IT
IF YOU CAN.

CHARLIE
HERE... DON'T
WORRY, COCKY!
WE ALL GET
IT!



SUDDENLY . . .

TARGET AHEAD!
I SEE IT—NO, WAIT,
COCKY.—THERE ARE
NO TREES BESIDE
IT!

SO WHAT!
THEY'VE CUT THEM
DOWN! I'M NEVER
WRONG ABOUT A
TARGET—IT'S
MY JOB!



THEY ROARED LOW OVER THE TOWER, DROPPING THEIR MARKERS . . .



JULIAN KEPT THE BOMBER LOW FOR ANOTHER TWO OR THREE MILES — THEN HAULED BACK ON THE STICK. HE CLIMBED STEADILY WITH EVERYTHING THE ENGINES COULD GIVE HIM . . .



MORGAN'S WORDS OVER THE INTERCOM STRANGELY BEWILDERED JULIAN.

YE'RE THE BEST O' THE LOT OF US . . . IT'S YE THAT'S KEPT US TOGETHER, AND PULLED EACH O' US THRU!



NO ONE HAD EVER SAID ANYTHING LIKE THAT TO JULIAN AND IT WAS ONLY THEN THAT HE BEGAN TO REALISE THAT HE HAD GOT COURAGE.

IT WAS CHARLIE MORGAN LOOKING DOWN AS THEY CLIMBED STEEPLY, WHO FIRST NOTICED TWO SETS OF SMOKE FLARES FAR BELOW.

GREAT SCOTT ! MY DOUBLE VISION'S COME BACK AGAIN ! T-TWO MARKERS !



BUT HIS EYES WERE NOT DECEIVING HIM. THEY WERE UP AT EIGHTEEN THOUSAND FEET, RUNNING IN TO BOMB AND SUDDENLY COCKY SAW THEM, TOO.

WHAT IS IT, COCKY?

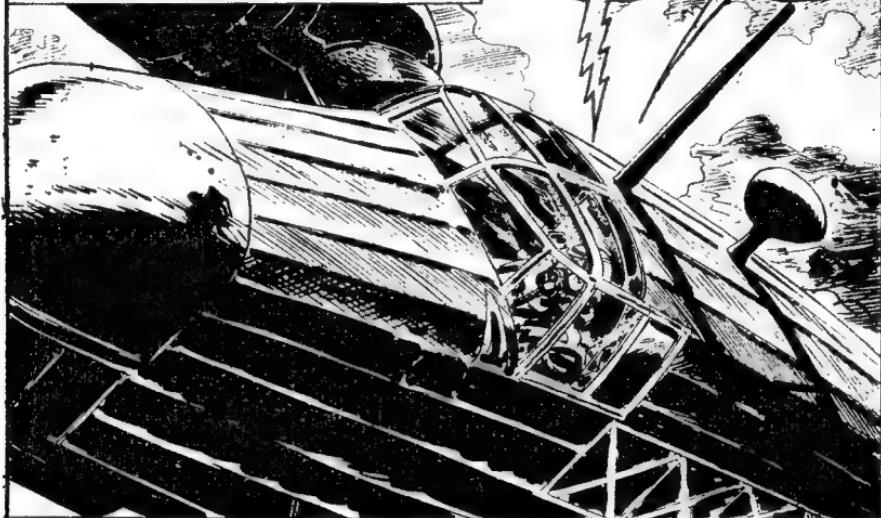
STEADY AS YOU GO, SKIPPER . . . JUST COMING INTO THE - LUMME ! AM I GOING CRAZY ?



THE TRUTH HIT COCKY IN A FLASH. THE BEAUFIGHTER HAD BEEN IN FIRST, AND HAD FOUND SOMETHING ELSE TO MARK. COCKY'S FIRST IMPULSE WAS TO DECLARE THE OTHER'S MARKER TO BE WRONG - HE REMEMBERED THE DESPERATE IMPORTANCE OF THE MISSION, AND SWALLOWED HIS PRIDE.

Skipper,
there are two
markers! I think
I've made a
mistake!

WHAT!
YOU, COCKY?
DON'T TELL ME
THAT!



I'VE BEEN
THINKING, SKIPPER...
YOU MAY HAVE
BEEN RIGHT ABOUT
THE TREES... THERE
MAY BE TWO TOWERS,
AND THE ONE WE
MARKED A
FAKE.

WELL, YOU KNOW WHAT
IT MEANS THEN, DON'T
YOU? GOING DOWN INTO
THE FLAK AGAIN TO
INVESTIGATE - WE'VE
BEEN LUCKY ONCE,
BUT...



MEANWHILE, FAR
BELOW THEM IN
THE BOWELS OF
THE EARTH . . .

HERR PROFESSOR,
DID YOU KNOW AN
ENGLANDER AIRCRAFT
IS ATTEMPTING TO
BOMB US AT THIS
VERY MOMENT?

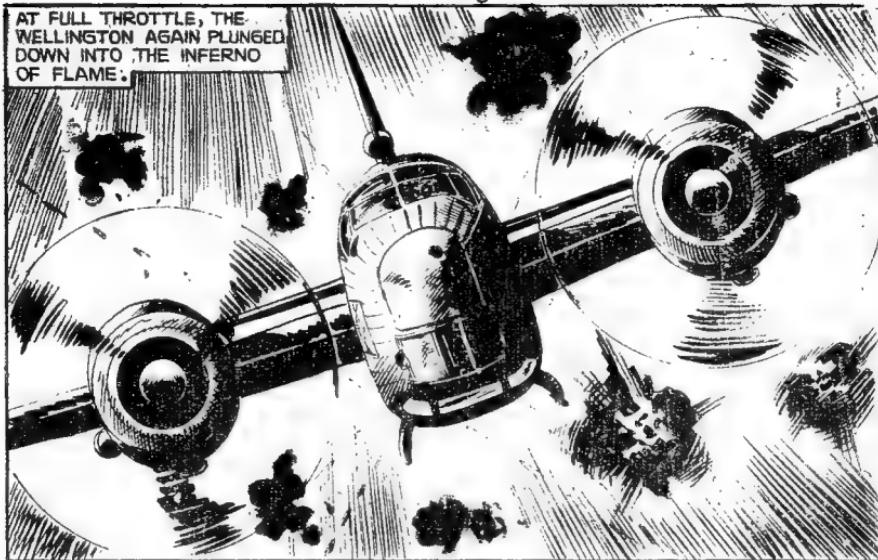
THEY CANNOT TOUCH
US DOWN HERE WITH SURFACE
BOMBS! ANYWAY, MY GENERAL,
I HAVE GOOD NEWS FOR YOU
AND THE FUEHRER . . . WE ARE
AHEAD OF SCHEDULE. THE
REACTOR IS ABOUT TO
MATURE—A MATTER
OF MINUTES . . .



RIGHT,
CHAPS! WE'RE
GOING IN
AGAIN!



AT FULL THROTTLE, THE WELLINGTON AGAIN PLUNGED DOWN INTO THE INFERNO OF FLAME.



TEN TERRIFYING SECONDS LATER, COCKY RECOGNISED THE CORRECT TARGET...

Skipper! We were wrong... and the Beaufighter was right!



I'M PULLING UP!
HANG ON LIKE GRIM DEATH,
LADS!

THEY FELT THE TREBLED GRAVITY TEAR AT THEIR BODIES — THEN, SOAKED WITH PERSPIRATION, AND SHAKING ALL OVER THEY WERE SOARING INTO CLEAR SKY...

WE'RE ABOVE THE WORST NOW!



READY,
COCKY—GOING
INTO THE BOMB RUN
NOW!

18,000 FEET... THEY WERE ON THE RUN IN FOR THE SECOND TIME. WITH METICULOUS DIRECTIONS COCKY GUIDED JULIAN OVER THE TARGET. SUDDENLY, THEY ALL FELT THE AIRCRAFT LEAP INTO THE AIR, AS THE GREAT BOMB DROPPED AWAY...

BOMB AWAY!

KEN AND COCKY!
WATCH FOR THE UPHEAVAL!
AND TAKE YOUR PHOTOS!
THEN WE'LL TRY FOR
HOME ...



Aces High

ALL THE BRITISH AIRMEN SAW OF THEIR WORK WAS A VAGUE BULGING OF THE GROUND FAR, FAR BELOW. IT WAS STRANGELY DISAPPOINTING BUT THE EFFECTS IN THE UNDERGROUND LABORATORY WERE DEVASTATING.

HIMMEL!

AAAAGH!



THE WELLINGTON'S ACE CREW HAD SUCCEEDED IN ITS MISSION - BUT THEIR MISTAKES AND CONSEQUENT DELAYS HAD COST THE GALLANT BEAUFIGHTER TOO MUCH FUEL TO RETURN ...

STAND BY FOR CRASH LANDING - DITCHING NOW!



Chapter 5. PHOTO FINISH

THE BATTERED BOMBER TURNED FOR HOME, SOON LEAVING THE FLAK-FILLED SKIES OVER THE TARGET FAR BEHIND. THE CREW WERE STRANGELY SILENT, EACH ALONE WITH HIS OWN THOUGHTS... FOR EACH WAS A DIFFERENT MAN FROM WHEN HE HAD SET OUT. AT LAST, THEY APPROACHED THE ENGLISH COAST...

DON'T FORGET TO PUT THE WHEELS DOWN, SKIPPER, FOR CROSSING THE COAST! ... PITY IF WE GOT MISTAKEN BY OUR OWN CHAPS— AFTER ALL THIS!

THANKS, KEN! PUTTING THEM DOWN NOW.

SUDDENLY, CHARLIE IN THE TAIL TURRET SPOTTED A YELLOW DINGHY IN THE SEA...

HEY, SKIPPER! THERE'S A WEE DINGHY BACK HERE TO PORT. ONE OF OURS, I'M THINKING—I CAN SEE THE TAIL OF THE PLANE STICKING OUT O' THE WATER.

Aces High

JULIAN TURNED THE BOMBER IN A TIGHT CIRCLE AND THEY RECOGNISED WITH AMAZEMENT THE NUMBER ON THE RUDDER OF THE SINKING AIRCRAFT. IT WAS THEIR OWN LOST BEAUFIGHTER.

TAKE THEIR POSITION, KEN... AND RADIO TO AIRSEA RESCUE, COCKY! THUMBS UP, AND WE'LL HAVE TO LEAVE THEM.

HOLD IT SKIPPER! THEY'RE TRYING TO TELL US SOMETHING... SOMETHING WRONG UNDERNEATH!



KEN DETLING GOT DOWN AND PEERED THROUGH A JAGGED FLAK HOLE IN THE CORNER OF THE FUSELAGE.

GOOD GRIEF!
THE WHOLE
UNDERCART'S
GONE ON THIS
SIDE!

WOW!
MUST HAVE
BEEN THE
FLAK?



ALREADY TESTED ALMOST BEYOND ENDURANCE, AND YET STILL SURVIVED, THE CREW MUST FACE A NEW ORDEAL. THEY WERE CIRCLING BASE...

SKIPPER!
SKIPPER!
LET'S BALE OUT, MAN!

REMEMBER,
KEN - WE'VE GOT
THE BLINKING PHOTOS
ON BOARD!

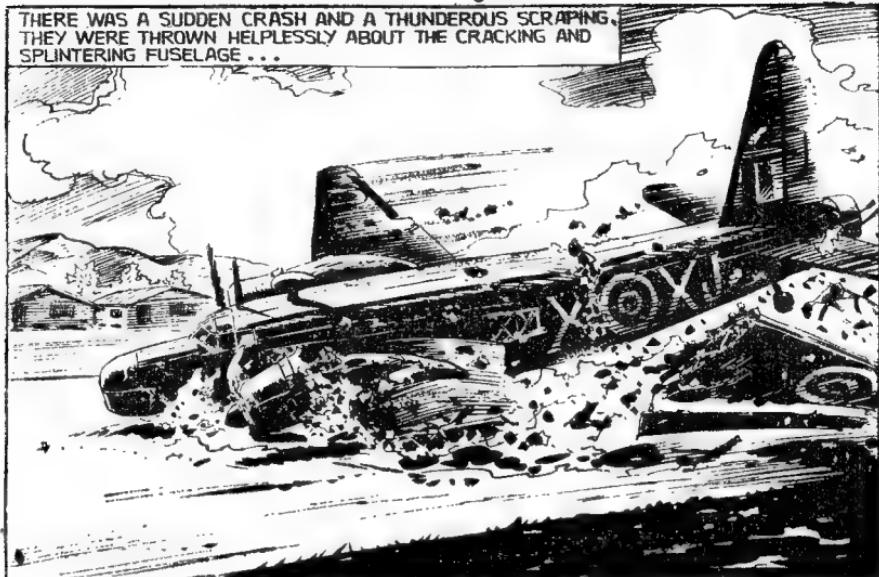
CHARLIE'S
RIGHT, KEN!
WE'VE GOT TO
TAKE THE OLD
BUS DOWN.

JULIAN FELT NO FEAR AS HE APPROACHED THE AIRFIELD AND DETLING WAS NOT SO MUCH AFRAID—AS BELIEVING THAT THIS AT LAST WAS HIS PERSONAL NEMESIS. HIS FRIEND HAD ONCE BEEN KILLED THIS WAY, AND IT HAD BEEN DETLING'S OWN DOING.

ALL CREW!
DITCHING
STATIONS!
SWITCHING OFF
NOW, CONTROL!

SO THIS IS
IT! I'VE HAD
IT COMING
A LONG
TIME.

THERE WAS A SUDDEN CRASH AND A THUNDEROUS SCRAPING.
THEY WERE THROWN HELPLESSLY ABOUT THE CRACKING AND
SPLINTERING FUSELAGE . . .



THE WRECKED BOMBER SLITHERED AND SHUDDERED TO A DUST ENVELOPED STANDSTILL. FOR AN EERIE MOMENT THERE WAS SILENCE — THEN THE FIRE BROKE OUT. DETLING GRABBED HIS CAMERA, AND TORE FRANTICALLY AT THE BROKEN WALL . . .



INSTANTLY, KENNETH DETLING TURNED - AND FLUNG HIMSELF BACK INTO THE FLAME-SHROUDED FUSELAGE OF THE WELLINGTON.

HE'S GOT HIM, BRAVE LAD! WELL DONE!



AGENTS IN NORWAY CONFIRMED THE COMPLETE AND DEVASTATING SUCCESS OF THE MISSION AND A FEW WEEKS LATER, THE STORY WAS RELEASED TO THE PRESS. COCKY'S OLD CREW RECOGNISED HIS PHOTOGRAPH ...

HEY, LOOK AT THIS!
COCKY'S GOT HIS GONG -
A BLINKING D. F. C.!

... THE PILOT OF THE AIRCRAFT WAS AWARDED THE V.C., THE NAVIGATOR THE D.S.O., AND THE GUNNER THE D.C.M. ...



BUT FOR THE FOUR MEN CONCERNED, THE VICTORY WAS ESSENTIALLY IN THEMSELVES.

WHEN I THINK HOW MY ERROR IN CALCULATION NEARLY WRECKED THE WHOLE MISSION...

I'LL TELL YOU THIS - IF ANY OF YOU NOTICE ME LOSING MY TEMPER AGAIN - CLOUT ME!

I KNOW I'M NOT WRONG THIS TIME, AND I'M NOT TOO SCARED TO SAY IT... YOU'RE ALL TALKING TOO MUCH! HA! HA!

JULIAN SAID NOTHING. HE WAS MODEST ABOUT WHAT HE WORE. BUT NOW HE KNEW HE WAS NOT ALTOGETHER A SHAM.

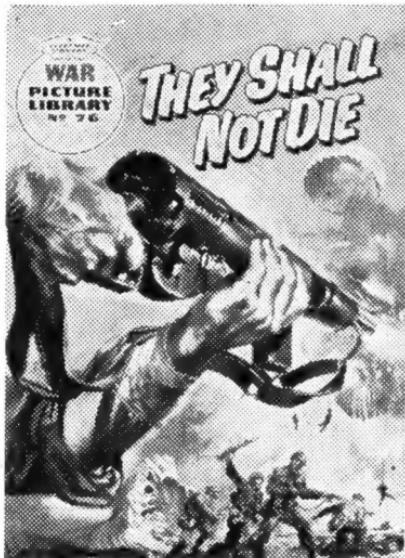


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FOR WAR THRILLS . . . ACTION . . . DRAMA . . .**

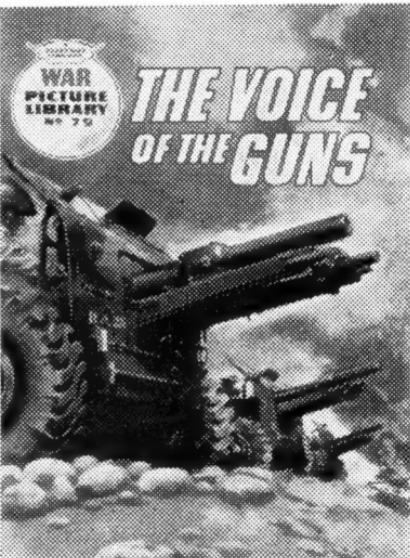
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